

Journal Star

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The Peoria Transcript
Established 1855

The Peoria Journal
Established 1877

The Peoria Star
Established 1897

The CIA And Me

I see where Patrick Buchanan reports that the big news splash that "400 journalists" have been hooked up the CIA includes such Super Spy antics as a CIA agent dropping in on a newsman visitor after his return and looking over his notes.

Goodness gracious! If that's the case, could it be that I, too, am one of the Big Bad Cloak and Dagger Boys working for the CIA? By the rules of journalism used by Rolling Stone, could be!

I made a solo trip around the Soviet Union in 1959, travelling to Moscow, Odessa, Yalta, Sochi, Rostov, Stalingrad, Tbilisi, Samarkand, Baku and back to Moscow. I kept a daily log of events, and from it wrote something like 27 reports of incidents with Russian people as they occurred. When I returned, a man showed up, identified himself as with the CIA, and asked me some questions about the trip.

I handed him my log book and told him he was welcome to read it, but all the same material could be read in a fuller form in the articles published in the Journal Star. He thanked me, borrowed the little pad of memory notes, and some time later returned it to me.

Big deal.

I don't know of anything revealing in an intelligence context from all that with two possible exceptions.

Flying from Tbilisi to Moscow, my plane made an "unscheduled" stop at Sverdlovsk in the Ural mountains, and some guy came aboard, singled me out, took me to a third floor, inside room in the terminal, where I waited in solitary splendor 45 minutes and then was led aboard and took off again. I simply had no chance to mingle, to stroll, to go anywhere or talk to anybody — or to see anything whatever but part of the terminal and four walls.

Sometime later when Gary Powers and his U-2 were shot down over Sverdlovsk it was made clear that he was there to photograph some especially sensitive installations and that this was an especially sensitive area.

It also seemed odd to me that the flight to Samarkand was a single flight a day, yet it flew only at night — and I was almost the only passenger aboard the giant, long-distance jet. There were four stewardesses and a good bit of the time all four were surrounding me practicing their English, what there was of it. Perhaps they were just keeping me busy and not looking out.

Later the location of the main Soviet rocket center was made public, and apparently when I was chattering with the Russian stewardesses in the darkness over Central Asia, I was flying right over it.

I wrote about both experiences just as they took place and published those events at the time in the Journal Star.

It may upset Rolling Stone and others who use CIA now as a code-word for evil the way Joe McCarthy used Communist a few years back. Thus, in the newest fashion I suppose I would be tagged a "fellow traveller," as McCarthy used to damn folks who ever talked to a Communist — but for talking to a CIA man nowadays instead of for talking to all those Communists. It may bother the screwball left in the U.S. these days, but the truth is that it certainly didn't bother the Russians.

I printed everything I knew . . . and they didn't flinch at letting me come back and make another circuit a few years later . . . throwing in Leningrad and Kiev plus most of my previous itinerary.

And I must cheerfully admit that if anything had happened which I perceived significant regarding the defense of the United States, I would certainly have told our government about it . . . via the CIA or whatever.

I am not a citizen of the moon.

This is my country.

And for any clown who perceived a danger to this country and clammed up about it, I would feel the way Andy Jackson put it when the Secretary of War asked him if he was aware of the Aaron Burr conspiracy and Andy wrote him: "If I had known of such a thing I would have cut his throat as cheerfully as I would your own in a similar circumstance . . ."

C.L.Dancey